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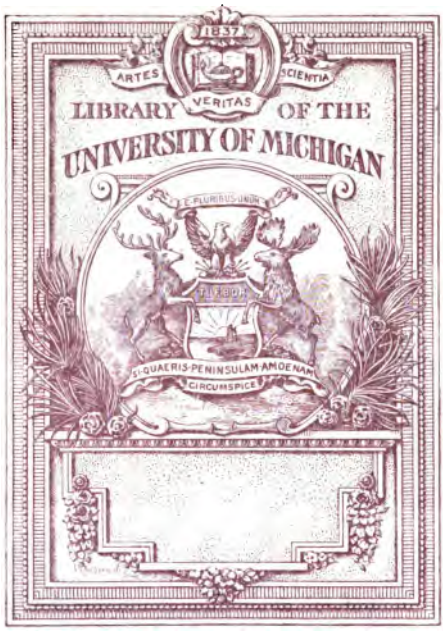
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TENNYSON'S GRAVE

BY

ST. CLAIR BADDELEY

LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN
1893

[*ONE SHILLING*]

TENNYSON'S GRAVE

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TENNYSON'S GRAVE

BY

Welbore St. CLAIR BADDELEY

LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN
1893
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I.*

The Dead! How still they lie, rapt in their dreams,
Beloved ones!
No Winter-storm, nor revelling April-beams,
Or Summer suns,
That break in, may molest
Their realm of glorious rest;
No thought, but true love's own,
May question of those lips to learn the skill
That sang of Truth alone,
And used no ill.
They are as children sleeping in the light,
Who smile for weariness;
But they'll not wake to it, however bright,
Or even turn from its too-fond caress.
Entreat them how we will,
They do not hear.
We cannot find their breath;
There is no rhythm in death:—
The ever-Dear
Forever still!

* In this first stanza the author commemorates the fact that while the Poet-Laureate was lying dead, his friend, Thomas Woolner, sculptor and poet, was likewise called away by the temporary Sunderer of all friendships.

II.

Upon the dewy violets down the steep
Of starless Night, a rose has fallen to sleep;
And there it glows like a remembered dream
Of love, embalming the dark dell of rest
With an immortal fragrance, while the wind,
Like one inspired by some enchanting theme,—
Enrich't with spoiling that for which he pined
In raptured song relieves his cloudy breast,
And, ranging the dim land from east to west,
Breathes onward the dread word that overwhelms,
Through misty orchards, down the midland lanes,
To lowly cots that peep at lordly elms,
To regal palaces and towering fanes,
And solemn woods, to the stern cliff that piles
His iron bastions o'er a glimmering host
Of Autumn-waves, which falling back forlorn,
Take the wild strain and surge it round the coast
By thundering forelands to the choral isles
And ebon crags—that all may know, and mourn.

III.

For ere the rains could lash the crimson leaves,
Ere yet the frost
Had set on one sweet flower his silvery thieves,
Love whispered to herself the Pride she lost,
And wept for woe
That veils her now and fires her sleep with tears.
For he is gone!
Her loveliest, her delight, is lying low,
And she must wander, with the grief she wears,
Forlorn—alone.
He lies above the shadows pale that roam
In broken legions o'er the silent plain,
In his dear home,—
Love's own unruined shrine, where she doth hide
All through the dark inexorable tide
Of mortal pain,
Moaning his name for music. The blithe birds
That brought our bygone summer, thence take wing,
And, seaward led,
By twilight towers that dream above the dead,
O'er thorp and hamlet, shrill the bitter words
Till, cloud-like, o'er the lone deep vanishing,
They drift our sorrow toward the land of Spring.

IV.

December hurrying with his sullen host
O'er waste and wold,
Will hear no more in tones that won him most,
The stainless glory of his triumph told;
And May will come,
Chiding the stillness of the woodland green,
And, with bowed head,
Mark her mute choir dismayed, the leader dumb,
Herself, of Beauty's realm the widowed queen,
Her monarch dead.
E'en Summer's self will seem but like eclipse,
When the moon clings about the mid-day sun,
When Nature sleeps,
And with unnatural dew the lily drips
For day undone.
For through the imperious veil of that false night
No ear shall hear
His love-notes echoing round, in brave delight
Wooing the God of gladness in his might
To re-appear.
Ay, 'twill be like some dear familiar hall
When first they raise the mourning blinds again,
And sunbeams fall
In the now voiceless chambers,—ah, in vain,
Save that more darkly we divine our pain,
Our joy recall.

V.

Can one forget the paths of purple down
We gaily trode—
The glowing pines that seemed to softly frown
Above the oak-wood, girdling, golden-brown,
The blest abode
Where those he loved but now together dwelt,
The voice of him
In Druid-thunder murmuring, while we felt
The glory of the sun-down round us melt,
The day grow dim?
We marked the veil that robes the ripening grape
O'er-creep the plain,
And to its brow the upland darkly drape
Till witching Night did through it deftly shape
The glittering Wain.
A sea of silence was poured out beneath
Her soft return;
Only the trancèd air began to breathe,
Kissing with dreamy strokes the yielding heath
And whispering fern.
Can I forget? I view his calm face yet,
And catch his tones upon the dew-fall now
As when we met.
If his dear hand in death remembers, how
Should I forget?

VI.

We talked of Cymbeline ;—of Imogen,—
Posthúmus' cynic spleen, the outlaw's den,
The maiden-boy ;
Arviragus—his love, his grief ; and then
The close in joy.
And while he poured his praise, his voice would move
As a great wave
Breaking in jewels, tender as the love
Our Shakespere sang in flowers to strew above
Fidélé's grave.

VII.

I told him of my cities in the South
That rise like faery islands from the vines,
With golden blowth
Of roses foaming over frescoed shrines ;—
Of lonely pines
And glorious hills of dawn by waters deep
O'erdasht with tones
Of Iris,—that, like charmèd emperors, keep
In their proud purple robed, sitting asleep
On giant thrones.

VIII.

We mused of some that live, some lost to view;
Until, at last,
It seemed with ease divine we did pursue
And take the splendid smiles that flitted through
The darkening Past,
And feasted on their glories above prize
That once did move,
Fresh from the very flowers of Paradise,—
That now remade the world of youth arise
A Heaven of love.

IX.

'Twas the wizard-voice unchanged, that with enchanting measures
Wrought melodious wonders in our stately mother-tongue,
Touching Truth's own being to delight with tender pressures
Till her soul responded with a glad and perfect song.
As a tidal billow in the summer morn advancing,
Takes the shore that loves it, bates the happy children's breath—
So he took the hearts of men and women, all entrancing
With his love-song overswelling chords of life and death.

X.

At the magic whisper of his wonder-singing,
  Dim Tradition opened wide her cloudy gate;
Showed within it shapes of beauty brightly springing
  Back to life with all their joy, their love and hate,
Till we felt the hearts of legions droop or quicken,
  And our own, re-echoing the tender strain,
Sighed and sorrowed for the fair or faithful stricken;
  For the faithless mixed with pity our disdain.

XI.

Viewed the timorous Enid heeding signs of peril
  though forbidden;
Saw the lissome wily Vivian luring Merlin through
  the wood;
Loved Elaine, the blameless maiden, in whose bosom,
  husht and hidden,
Glowed the holiest fire that ever flushed the Heaven
  of womanhood;
Heard we, too, the tristful Queen in penitential
  passion pleading,
While her Lord, the King, rode fading from her in
  his misty might,
Toward the rolling sea of battle that ere noon upheld
  him bleeding
Borne into the broken chancel by his one remaining
  knight.

XII.

From the central core of Being, as from a deathless flower, distilling
Clear and fragrant honey that might sweeten all men's lives,
Sang the Poet, never-faltering,—in serene devotion filling
With the sovereign balsam hopeless empty human hives.
Wisely silent, let them be,—the all-too-curious forecasters,—
Of his future fame and glory,—since, to-day the unreckoning throng,
Sorrowing knows him surely numbered with his own immortal Masters
Gone before him, death-united Kings of English Song!

XIII.

'Tis night again! Behind the solemn shrine,
Like golden leaves, the autumn-stars decline
As to the deep;
While Summer's breath (as though in love's delight
She sealed her soul to this October night),
Outsweetens sleep.
The gentle dead seem whispering here beneath
The spectral cloister. Centuries of death
Are conscious of his coming; while, above,—
Like Wisdom dreaming in the arms of Love,—
Men proudly bring,
Reposing grandly 'neath his royal wreath,
A very King.

XIV.

They bear him softly down the hushed arcade,
Through portals grim
That ope their iron arms to welcome him
To the still shade
Where now he lies—the mourners round him ranged,
In chapel dim,
(Whose weathered frieze has been as featly changed
To vestal flowers
As a dull tale his magic turned to song)—
While the lone bell is moaning deep and long
Among the towers.

XV.

Another noon is here, whose glory falls
Through the rich windows, down the mighty walls
That hold, forlorn,
All that she hath to-day, of sweet or strong,—
Our England,—round her sepulchre of Song
Gathered to mourn;
And every heart beats high, as o'er the throng
Peals through the splendour of the perfumed shrine
One Song divine.

XVI.

E'en such a strain, should yield the happy air
That murmurs thro' the myriad isles of Heaven
And, Love-like, thrills the plumes of angels there;—
The music when God moves;—the whisper given
By ebbing waves of light, (as from the strings
Of dulcimers innumerable, unseen),
That break for joy of Him; though toucht with teen
To mortal sense,—in which all perfect things
Transmuted are by our own sufferings,
That give 'what is' in thrall to 'what-hath-been.'